

FLINT (W<sup>m</sup>)

AN

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE ERIE COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY,

JANUARY 7, 1851.

BY REV. WILLIAM FLINT, M. D.

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ERIE, PENN.

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE CHRONICLE.

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*Surgeon General's Office*  
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Washington, D. C.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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DR. WM. FLINT.

*Dear Sir,*—At the last meeting of the ERIE COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY we were appointed a committee to solicit for publication a copy of your eloquent Address delivered on Tuesday evening, January 7th.

Hoping that it may suit your pleasure and convenience to comply with the wishes of the Society, we remain with great respect,

Your obedient servants,

J. L. STEWART,

F. PERKINS,

M. J. JOHNSON.

*Erie, Jan. 13, 1851.*

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*Erie, Jan. 14, 1851.*

GENTLEMEN,—I thank the Society for the honor done me in requesting a copy of my Lecture for publication. It is at their disposal. Being written without any intention to publish, I did not note whence I gained my facts, and I have neither time nor inclination again to go over the books which I consulted. I acknowledge myself indebted to the "Criterion," to "Physic and Physicians," and to a most excellent prize essay by Washington Hooker, M. D. Hoping that the delusions which now, especially in this community, so lamentably prevail may speedily be dissipated,

I am, gentlemen, your most obedient servant,

W. FLINT.

*Drs. J. L. Stewart, F. Perkins, M. J. Johnson.*



## ADDRESS.

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*Gentlemen of the Medical Society, Ladies and Gentlemen*,—The subject of “Medical Delusions” which the Society has allotted me, upon which to address you this evening, is one so vast in extent, embracing so great a period of time, and such an almost infinite variety of collateral topics, that but feeble justice can be done to it in a single lecture. I shall therefore attempt no labored philosophic exposition of the causes of these delusions; but giving a brief history of the art of medicine, shall afterwards notice some of those delusions, and shall show you from a few common-sense and well known principles why they deceived and are still deceiving the community. As we shall have to do mostly with facts of history, and of daily observation, we shall have but little field for originality, or for beauty and grace of style. We shall draw freely from every source within our reach, and trust to interest you only from the curious exhibition we shall be enabled to make of human weakness, folly and credulity.

The history of the art of medicine begins with fable, and for the most part rests on dubious tradition. Endeavoring to penetrate the mists of the past, we find the object of our search becoming more and more indistinct. Celsus, a celebrated Roman physician, proud as even then he might well be of his art, asserts that medicine and mankind must have originated at the same time. His words are, “*Medicina nusquam non est.*” The learned Schultze, in his *Historia Medicinæ*, also with much wit and ingenuity maintains that our first parents were well skilled in physiology, and that Adam must necessarily have been the first physician.

The sacred writings, to which we naturally look for information of the past, afford here but little assistance. Moses gave directions for the cure and prevention of leprosy, and enforced his teachings by the sanctions of religion. In the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, it is said that “God created the physician and the physic, and that it is He that hath given science to man, and that it is He that healeth man.” Indeed, the ancients almost universally ascribed the art of medicine to the gods. Cicero says, “*Deorum immortalium inventioni consecrata est ars medica.*” The art of physic is sacred to the invention of the immortal gods. Hippocrates says, “they who first found the way of curing distempers thought it an art which deserved to be ascribed to the immortal gods, which is the generally received opinion.”

We are told, by Herodotus, that it was the custom at Babylon, authorized by a solemn decree of the empire, to carry the sick to the market places and public streets, and every

passer-by was required to investigate the case, and if he knew any remedy to name it. This custom was observed also among other eastern nations, and we find one or two allusions to it in Scripture. Says the prophet Jeremiah, "Is it nothing to you, *all ye that pass by*, behold and see, if there be any sorrow equal to my sorrow." And says St. Mark, alluding to the same custom, "And whithersoever he entered, into villages and cities and countries, *they laid the sick in the streets*, and besought that they might touch, if it were but the hem of his garment."

In Egypt the art of medicine was early and warmly cultivated by the priests, who seem to have been the physicians. Alpinus, in his history of Egyptian medicine, reports that they discovered the art of curing disease from brute beasts; thus phlebotomy was taken from a practice noticed in the river horse, which bleeds itself when plethoric by pressing its thigh on a sharp reed. Dogs and cats are known, when sick, to vomit themselves by eating grass; swine when ill refuse food, and so recover by abstinence. Among the Egyptians originated the delusion, which is still prevalent in many portions of our country, that the different parts of the body were governed by the zodiacal signs, and that when any section was diseased, a cure could only be effected by invoking the demon to whose province it belonged. In many of our almanacs, for the benefit, we suppose, of those who still hug the deceit, the human body is represented as thus apportioned—in the humorous language of Southey: "There Homo stands, naked but not ashamed, upon the two Pisces, one foot upon each; the fish being neither in air, nor water, nor upon earth, but self-suspended as it appears in the void. Aries has alighted with two feet on Homo's head, and has sent a shaft through the forehead into his brain. Taurus has quietly seated himself across his neck, the Gemini are riding astride a little below his right shoulder. The whole trunk is laid open, as if part of the old accursed punishment for high treason had been performed upon him; the Lion occupies the thorax as his proper domain, and the Crab is in possession of the abdomen. Sagittarius, volant in the void, has just let fly an arrow, which is on the way to his right arm. Capricornus breathes out a visible influence that penetrates both knees; Aquarius inflicts similar punctures upon both legs. Virgo fishes, as it were, at his intestines; Libra at the part affected by schoolmasters in their anger, and Scorpio takes the wickedest aim of all." Absurd as is the supposition contained in this delusion, there are many, not otherwise credulous or ill informed, who yet most fully believe in it—who consult their almanacs with as much confidence in the virtue of the zodiacal signs as they have in the accuracy of the time there appointed for the rising and setting of the sun.

The art of medicine passed from Egypt into Greece, and was thence disseminated through the whole world. Fifty years before the Trojan war, Esculapius was deified on account of his medical skill, and his two sons succeeded him, enjoying nearly the same reputation for skill and success.—Some idea of the state of medical science in the days of Homer may be attained from the manner in which he describes Patroclus, dressing the wounds of Eurypides:

“ Patroclus cut the forky steel away,  
When in his hand a bitter root he bruised ;  
The wound he wash’d, the styptic juice infused—  
The closing flesh that instant ceased to glow,  
The wound to torture, and the blood to flow.”

When Menelaus was wounded in the side by an arrow, Machaon, the son of Esculapius, is represented, after washing the wound and sucking out the blood, as applying a dressing of bruised roots to appease the pain:

“ Then suck’d the blood, and sovereign balm infused  
Which Chiron gave, and Esculapius used.”

But it was reserved for Hippocrates, justly styled the “Father of Medicine,” who lived about 450 years B. C., to separate and to elevate the medical profession—to free it from rash empiricism—from the trammels of superstition and the frivolous dreams of philosophers. He opposed the doctrine then generally inculcated of the celestial origin of diseases, and boldly declared that no ill came from the gods, but owed its origin to its own natural and manifest cause. In declaring this truth he set himself against a wide spread delusion; for even the learned Celsus, two hundred years after Hippocrates, says, “*Morbus ad iram deorum immortalium velatos esse, et ab iisdem opem passi solitam.*” But he had too much medical knowledge not to use active remedial agents; he therefore writes, “*Morbi non eloquentia, sed remediis curantur.*”

Pliny says that Rome was settled 600 years before any physicians established themselves there—the sick being cured by means of charms, fascinations, incantations, amulets, &c. The book of Cato the Censor, “*De Re Rustica*,” is a manifest proof of the superstition of the times. He proposes, as a certain cure of fracture, to have the limb bound up, and the following words sung once in every day, “*Huat, hanat, ista pista fista, dominabo, damnastra et luxata.*” This doubtless, however, was full as effectual as a cure for odontalgia which we lately saw in a book of Homoeopathic practice; which was, to hang a piece of opium, about the size of a pea, upon the outside of the cheek. This latter is a production of the 19th century.

The first physician who practised regularly at Rome was Archagathus, a Greek; but making too free use of the knife



and the actual cautery, he was banished the city. The next physician of note who appeared at Rome was Asclepiodes, and he deserves a passing notice as the father and model of all quacks. Commencing as a teacher of rhetoric, he soon abandoned it for the practice of medicine, and by his eccentricities and his boastings rapidly brought himself into notice. Like his modern children, he only was Sir Oracle, and he affected to despise every thing that had been done before him. He ridiculed Hippocrates, and nicknamed his system, "A meditation upon death." Notwithstanding his quackery, he was a shrewd and observing physician, and did much to advance his profession. He opposed bleeding, and depended mostly upon gestation, friction, wine, and the internal and external use of cold water. He divided diseases into acute and chronic, and was the first originator of the "*Balnea pensilis*," or shower bath.

In the first century lived Aurelius Cornelius Celsus, sometimes called the Latin Hippocrates, and well does he deserve the title. His works have descended unmutated to us, are universally read and admired by the scientific physician, and form a conspicuous part of our standard medical literature. One hundred and thirty years after Celsus flourished Galen, physician to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, who also did much to advance the science of medicine.

But little is known of the progress of the art of medicine during the middle ages. *Ætius*, in his time, complained of the general use of quack medicines, nostrums, &c., and the immense price of those which were in repute. *Danaus*, he tells us, sold his collyrium, at Constantinople, for one hundred and twenty pieces of gold to each patient; and *Nicostatus* required two talents for his celebrated "*esothesis*," as antidote against the cholera. Quackery and quack medicines were then, just as they are now, full of promise, but full also of fraud and deceit. The inimitable *Matthews*, in his "*Humours of a Country Fair*," has well described quackery both of ancient and modern times. His certificate of a celebrated specific reads thus: "Dear Sir,—I was cut in two in a saw-pit, and cured by one bottle." "Sir,—By the bursting of a powder mill, I was blown into ten thousand anatomies. The first bottle of your incomparable collected all the parts together—the second restored life and animation—before a third was finished I was in my usual state of health." It is true that this, in comparison with the past, is an age of quacks and nostrums. The legal and the clerical professions, as if jealous of the superior learning, research and science of their medical brethren, for the most part are endeavoring to degrade the profession—and to associate in the minds of the public, as of equal authority, the illiterate quack and pretender and him whose mind is enriched with the learning, the skill, the experi-



ence of all past ages, and whose heart glows with every noble and honorable emotion. Even our standard works, received and acknowledged as the result of much observation and experience, by all medical men throughout the world, are declared, from the bench, as of less authority than the crude guess and suppositions of a sworn and living quack, ignorant of the first principles of medical science and theory, and incapable of forming any just judgment thereon. Such is declared, by the highest authority, to be the law in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The quack, springing from the plough or the workshop, like Pallas, when she jumped full armed from the brain of Jove, is esteemed by our legal would be wise ones, without thought, study or apprenticeship, completely consummate in all the requisites of his art. And by whom is it that the science and profession of medicine is thus sought to be degraded? By gentlemen of the so called legal profession—by those whose mental faculties are most often employed, for the sake of a paltry fee, in making the worse appear the better reason—in fact, in perverting truth; by those who exercise all their wit, learning and eloquence, not to establish but to pervert the facts, and so confuse and perplex the poor jury and the persons examined. Let us not, however, be understood as censuring all lawyers or the profession of the law itself; while the present artificial state of society continues they are a necessary evil, and must be tolerated for the little good they do. Pope says, “all partial evil is universal good,” and so we must bow to circumstances. There are in the so called legal profession pure and upright minds, which would scorn to do or defend a wrong, and to such, knowing the temptations which they have to encounter, we pay the highest respect and honor; but to the greater part of the profession we think the following anecdote applicable: “M. de la B——, a French gentleman, having invited several friends to dine on a *maigre* day, his servant brought him word that there was only a single salmon left in the market, which he had not dared to bring away, because it had been bespoken by a barrister. ‘Here,’ said the master, putting two or three pieces of gold into his hand, ‘go back directly and buy me the barrister and the salmon too.’” Pardon us, gentlemen, for this digression; facts and recollections forced it upon us. To return now to our history.

During the middle ages, the Monks and Priests seem also to have been the physicians. Charms, amulets, &c., being then very generally used as medicinal agencies, the Council of Laodicea, as early as A. D. 366, forbid the priesthood “the study and practice of enchantments, mathematics, astrology, and the binding of the soul by amulets.” The priests, however, continued the practice—their want of knowledge being

supplied by mystery, and faith in the patient usurping the place of effectual prescription. This ignorance and cupidity of the monks, for they did not practise without a liberal fee, caused the Lateran Council, under the pontificate of Calistus II, A. D. 1123, to forbid the attendance of priests and monks at the bed-side of the sick, other than as ministers of religion. Still, however, it was followed, and Pope Innocent II, in a Council at Rheims enforced the decree, prohibiting the monks from attending schools of medicine, and directing them to confine their practice to the precincts of their own monastery. They still continuing to practise, a Lateran Council in 1139 threatened all who neglected its orders with the severest penalties, and a suspension from the exercise of all ecclesiastical functions. At the Council of Tours, held in 1163, by Pope Alexander III, it was maintained that the evil, in order to seduce the priesthood from the duties of the altar, involved them in mundane occupations, thus exposing them to constant and perilous temptations. They were, therefore, prohibited the studies of medicine and the law, under the penalty of excommunication. Stringent as were these measures, they were found inadequate to the intended purpose, and medicine was not effectually divorced from theology until a special bull from the Pope authorizing physicians to marry produced the desired effect.

Having traced, in this faint outline of the history of medicine, the science down to the revival of letters in Europe, we leave it, and shall consider some of the more prominent delusions, which have attended its progress down to the present time.

It would be no easy task to assign the earliest age of quackery in medicine. There is in the human heart an innate love of the mysterious, and mankind have ever since the creation of the world delighted in being deceived, thinking with the poet, that "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." Most truly too has the poet said,

"First man creates, and then he fears the elf—  
Thus others cheat him not, but he himself.  
He loathes the substance, but he loves the shell;  
You 'll ne'er convince a fool himself is so—  
He hates realities, and hugs the cheat,  
And still the only pleasure 's the deceit."

Well and truly too has Southey said, "man is a dupeable animal. Quacks in medicine, quacks in religion, and quacks in politics know this, and act upon that knowledge. There is scarcely any one who may not, like a trout, be taken by tickling." A visit to a quack produces a pleasurable excitement. There is something wonderfully taking in the rashness with which we deliver ourselves up to the illegitimate practitioner of medicine, whose learning

comes by nature and not by study. We are pleased when a large demand is made upon our credulity, and we can imagine ourselves almost miraculously cured of some real or supposed disease. Lord Bacon says "that the impostor frequently triumphs at the bedside of the sick, when true merit is affronted and dishonored; the people have always considered a quack or an old woman as the rivals of true physicians. Hence it is that every physician, who has not greatness of soul enough not to forget himself, feels no difficulty in saying with Solomon, 'if it is with me as with the madman, why should I wish to appear wiser than he is!'" The one indeed may starve, while the other thrives and goes laughing through and at the world.

"Ridet, æternumque ridebit."

We pass briefly over the study of alchemy, as to investigate it minutely would occupy too much of our time. The objects of the alchemists were to convert other metals into silver and gold, to remove all diseases and to prolong human life to an indefinite extent. It was pursued with great ardor in many countries, and even by some eminent men of our mother land. Lord Bacon speculated upon it, and Sir Isaac Newton is said once to have entertained the possibility of finding the true philosopher's stone. Paracelsus, the most renowned quack of modern times, was also a distinguished alchemist; he boasted that he could make man immortal, yet died himself at the early age of forty-eight. He was Professor of medicine at Basle, but became renowned by a nostrum which he called Azoth, declaring it to be the true philosopher's stone, the medicinal panacea, the tincture of life. He styled himself the monarch of physicians, and said that the hair on the back of his head knew more than all authors—that the clasps of his shoes were more learned than Galen or Avicenna, and that his beard possessed more experience than all the academy at Basle. "*Stultissimus pilus occipitis mei plus scit, quam omnes vestri doctores, et calceorum meorum annuli doctiores sunt quem vester Galenus et Avicenna, barba mea plus experta est quam vestræ omnes academicæ.*" When we compare this with the published boastings of modern quacks, who acknowledge no superior, well may we say with Solomon, "There is nothing new under the sun—the thing that has been shall be."

Medicinal substances were once thought to possess virtues varying according to their colors. Thus white was regarded as cooling—red, as heating. Red flowers were given for diseases of the blood, yellow for derangement of the biliary secretions. In small pox, red bed coverings were ordered, that the pustules might the more readily be brought to the surface, and every thing about the bed of the patient and even



the room itself was ordered to be hung in red. John of Gadesden was the first Englishman appointed court physician at London. He directed his small-pox patients to be wrapped in scarlet dresses; and he says "that when the son of the renowned king of England (Edw. II.) lay sick of the small-pox, I took care that every thing around the bed should be of a red color, which succeeded so completely that the Prince was restored to perfect health, without a vestige of a pustule remaining." The Emperor Francis I., when sick with the small-pox, of which he died, was rolled up in a scarlet cloth, by order of his physician. This was as late as 1765. This belief in the virtues of red is not entirely gone. Many now, and we doubt not very many might be found in this community, who believe that red flannel ought always to be used in rheumatic complaints, and as a bandage in sprains. Nay, such can tell you of cases where white flannel had been used for a long time without success; but which readily yielded when red was employed.

The use of charms, talismans, &c., is very ancient, and there is scarcely a disease for which one has not been given; especially have they been used with success in derangements of the nervous system, and in periodical diseases—both of which are well known by physicians to be greatly subject to the influence of the passions and the emotions of the mind. Charms were also employed to avert evil, and to counteract supposed malignant influences. Corals were used to keep off evil spirits and to avert the consequences of the evil eye. "Corals," says Paracelsus, "are of two sorts—one a clear, bright, shining red—the other, a purple, dark red. The bright is good to quicken phansie, and is against phantasies or nocturnal spirits, which fly from those bright corals, as a dog from a staff, but they gather where the dark cave is."—Jemnius says, "Coral bound to the neck takes off turbulent dreams and allays the nightly fears of children. It preserveth such as bear it from fascination or bewitching, and in this respect is hanged about children's necks." Remnants of this superstition are seen in the coral beads and necklaces with which mothers adorn their children, in some parts of our country, as we have had occasion to know, with full belief in their magic efficacy. Epilepsy is a disease in which charms have been used with much success. Dr. Kirton states that he saw a man cured of a paroxysm by simply cutting off some of his hair and putting it into his hand. Rings have also been much used for this purpose. Thus in Berkshire, Eng., a ring made from a piece of silver collected at the communion is considered a certain cure for convulsions and fits of every kind. If collected on Easter Sunday, its efficacy is greatly increased. In the county of Devonshire, a ring is preferred made of three nails or screws that have

been used to fasten a coffin, and that have been dug up from the churchyard.

Says Grose, "A halter wherewith any one has been hanged, if tied about the head, will cure the headache." Moss, grown upon a human skull, if dried and powdered and taken as a snuff, is no less efficacious.

To cure a quartern ague, or the gout, it is directed to take the hair and nails, cut them small, mix them with wax, stick them to a crab or craw fish, and cast him into the river again. In the county of Exeter, Eng., it is said still to be the custom of those afflicted with ague to visit at midnight the nearest cross-roads five times and there bury a new laid egg—for they believe that with the egg they also bury the ague. If the experiment fail, for it is often successful through hope and the agitation it occasions, they attribute it to some unlucky accident which has befallen them on the way, since in going and returning they must observe the strictest silence—taking care not to speak to or to notice any one whom they may meet.

It is a common practice in Devonshire, Cornwall, and some other parts of England, to enquire of any one riding on a piebald horse a remedy for the whooping cough, and whatever may be named is regarded as an infallible specific.

Grose says, that if a tree of any kind be split, and weak or ricketty children be drawn through it, and the tree afterwards bound up, as the tree heals and grows together so will the children acquire strength. Sir John Cullum saw the operation performed, and he says, that the tree was split longitudinally about five feet, the fissure was held open by the gardener, whilst the friends of the child, having first stripped him naked, passed it thrice through head foremost. This done the tree was bound up with pack thread, and as the bark healed, so it was believed the child would recover. Charms for all diseases were once so much in fashion that it is difficult to make a fitting selection from them—we can mention but a very few more.

Sir Kenelm Digby says, "It would seem a folly that one should offer to wash his hands in a well polished basin wherein there is not a drop of water, yet this may be done by the reflection of the moonbeams only, which will afford a competent humidity to do it; but they who have tried it have found their hands, after they are wiped, to be much moister than usual; but this is an infallible way to take away warts from the hands, if it be often used."

Andrew Boorde, who lived in the reign of Henry VIII., speaking of the cramp, says, "The kyngs of Englande doth hallowe every yere cramp rynges, which rynges worne on one's finger doth help them which hath the crampe." We learn from Bishop Burnet that cramp rings were blessed so

late as the time of Henry VIII., and there is still extant a letter of Anne Boleyn, the Queen, in which she says, "Mr. Stephens, I send you here cramp rings for you and Mr. Gregory and Mr. Peter, praying you to distribute them as you think best. Anne Boleyn."

Pierius mentions an infallible antidote against the sting of a scorpion;—the patient was to sit on an ass, with his face to the tail, for by this means the poison was transmitted from the man to the beast. Indeed but a few years have passed, since the most loathsome preparations were used successfully as charms for the cure and prevention of diseases. Mummy had the honor to be worn in the bosom, next the heart, by kings and princes and all who could afford it. It was thought capable of protecting the wearer from the most deadly infections, and securing the heart from the invasion of all malignant passions. A drachm of a preparation, called treacle of mummy, taken in the morning, prevented the danger of infection all that day. Thus decayed spices and gums, with the dead body of an Egyptian, were thought to give long life. In the 19th century, a little pill of sugar is thought by equally wise persons to do the same.

But we can dwell no longer on the use of charms. They were doubtless oftentimes of great efficacy, as equally inefficient and ridiculous means are now; but the wonderful cures that followed their employment can only be attributed to the "*vis medicatrix naturæ*," aided by faith and imagination, for these, it is well known, often effect material changes in the human body, and induce healthy action; but of this we shall speak more hereafter.

Among the more prominent of the "Medical Delusions" of the past and the present are the cure by sympathy and by the royal touch, Perkins' metallic tractors and the use of tar water; the wonderful cures of Valentine Greatrakes and Prince Hohenlohe, last and least homœopathy. It may be said that most of these delusions have passed away, and that there is, therefore, no profit in considering them, but they all have their root in the same soil. The humbugs of the day are fruit from the same stock: all then may appropriately be classed and considered together.

The cure, as it was called, by sympathy, was a most curious Medical Delusion. What is now the common method of healing wounds appeared to the Surgeons of the times of James I. and Charles I. as most contrary to nature, and their unhappy patients suffered most cruelly in consequence. Indeed surgeons then, by their mode of treatment, seem really to have tried how far it was possible to impede instead of to facilitate the natural process of cure; and to those who are acquainted with modern surgery, it appears almost miraculous that they were able to produce union of any wound whatever.



The fact that an incised wound will generally heal by a natural process, if it be accurately closed, whether this be done by bandage, suture or adhesive plaster, was then generally unknown—no surgeon in Europe ventured to heal wounds by the first intention, without pretending to have discovered by abstruse studies in philosophy and alchemy, a sympathetic and philosophical mode of cure. The history of the doctrine of healing wounds by the powder of sympathy is the history of adhesion—of union by the first intention—a history which until the time of John Hunter was never fairly developed or distinctly comprehended.

The inventor of the sympathetic powder was the notorious Paracelsus, and the Paracelsian doctors flourished greatly in England and other lands about the middle of the 17th century; and although such things as powdered mammy, and human blood, and moss from the skull of a thief hung in chains, were considered essential ingredients in the weapon ointments of that day, the practice was far from being confined to the ignorant and vulgar, but learned men in great numbers believed in it, just as has been the case with all medical errors and fantasies down to the present time. One case will show the practical operation of this method of cure. Sir Kenelm Digby, secretary to Charles I., was driven during the civil wars into exile. Being at Montpellier in France, he lectured before an assembly of nobles and learned men upon the cure of wounds by the powder of sympathy. He related before them the cure of Mr. Howell, who whilst endeavoring to part two of his friends who were fighting had his hand cut to the bone. Sir Kenelm was applied to for assistance. "I told him," says he, "that I would willingly serve him, but if haply he knew the manner I would cure him, it may be, he would not expose himself to my method of curing, because he would think it, peradventure, either ineffectual or superstitious." He replied, "The wonderful things which many have related to me of your way of medicinement makes me nothing doubt at all of its efficacy; and all that I have to say unto you is comprehended in the Spanish proverb, *'Hagase el milagro y hagalo Mahoma—Let the miracle be done, tho' Mahomet do it.'*" I asked him then for anything that had the blood upon it; so he presently sent for his garter, wherewith his hand was first bound, and dissolving some viuriol in a basin of water, I put in the garter, observing in the interim what Mr. Howell did. He suddenly started, as if he had found some strange alteration in himself. I asked him what he ailed? "I know not what ails me, but I find that I feel no more pain; methinks that a pleasing kind of freshness, as if it were a wet cold napkin, did spread over my hand, which hath taken away the inflammation that tormented me before." I replied, "Since then you feel already so good effect of my medica-

ment, I advise you to cast away all your plasters, only *keep the wound clean* and in a moderate temper between heat and cold.' To be brief, there was no sense of pain afterwards; but within five or six days the wounds were cicatrized and entirely healed."

This was a case of what was called a cure by the wet method, but it was also effected in a dry way, and Straus, in a letter to Sir Kenelm, gives an account of a cure performed by Lord Gilburne, an English nobleman, upon a carpenter who had cut himself severely with an axe. The axe, bespotted with blood, was sent for, besmeared with an ointment, wrapped up warmly and carefully hung up in a closet. The carpenter was immediately relieved, and all went on well for some time, when the wound suddenly became exceedingly painful, and upon resorting to his lordship it was ascertained that the axe had fallen from the nail by which it was suspended, and thereby became uncovered.

This history would be unprofitable and uninteresting, were it not for the practical lesson which it affords. Cures doubtless were effected, but did the sympathetic powders accomplish them? The cures certainly followed their use, and so their virtues were lauded and they believed to be highly efficacious. Men reasoned as they are still too apt to do, "*post hoc, propter hoc*," that whatever follows a cause must be the result of that cause. They forget or know not the power of the human system to recover itself, especially when aided by faith, hope, and a strong imagination. This "*vis medicatrix naturæ*," as it has appropriately been termed, is indeed the chief agency in many cases in the cure of diseases. Sometimes it is the only one, and very often effects a cure in spite of the mistaken and officious interference of art. So great is its power that the celebrated Dr. Wolcott confesses himself entirely ignorant whether the patient was cured by the "*vis medicatrix naturæ*" or by the administration of medicine. And yet quacks, and even good physicians and the public generally, are apt to leave this power out of view, and to attribute cures, as a matter of course, entirely to some favorite remedy which has been employed.

This disposition we consider the great source of the medical delusions of all ages and countries. To show you that the cures attributed to the sympathetic powders were the result of the efforts of nature, a few words will suffice. What is the mode of treatment now employed by the surgeon in the healing of wounds? To clear the wound from extraneous matter, to bring the edges in apposition, to keep them in contact by a proper bandage, to modify temperature and to give rest. And what is this but the method of the sympathetic curers? They washed the wound with water, kept it clean and undisturbed, and in a few days the union of parts, the

process of adhesion was perfected, and the cure was complete; yet this result was then wholly attributed to the sympathetic powders, since it followed their use. Has the 19th century improved in its ratiocination?

We come now to another great medical delusion; that which attributed a sanative power in all cases of scrofula to the royal touch. This is supposed to have been a monkish invention to increase the reverence for kings, and was practised in France and England. Jeremy Collier, in his Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain, says, "that King Edward the Confessor was the first that cured this distemper, and from him it has descended as an hereditary miracle upon all his successors. To dispute the matter of fact is to go to the excess of skepticism, to deny our senses, and to be incredulous even to ridiculousness."

The power of healing by the royal touch was practised by all the kings of England, though without much parade, until the times of Charles I. and II. "The former of these kings," says the historian, "excelled all his predecessors in the divine gift, for it is manifest beyond all contradiction, that he not only cured by his sacred touch, but likewise perfectly effected the same cure by his prayer and benediction only." But in no reign did the practice prevail to such an extent as in that of Charles II. One of the historians of the time gives a table of the number of persons touched by this king, from May, 1660 to May, 1680, distinguishing the number of each year, the grand total amounting to the almost incredible number of 92,107; at an average of 12 a day.—The touching was usually performed on Sundays and feast days, and the success attending it may be judged of by the following curious avowal of the king's surgeon:

"When I consider his Majestie's gracious touch, I find myself really non plust, and shall ever affirm that all chirurgeons must ever truckle to the same, and come short of his marvellous and miraculous method of healing; and for further manifestations hereof, I do humbly presume to assert that more souls have been healed by his Majestie's sacred touch in one year than have ever been cured by all the physicians and chirurgeons of his three kingdoms ever since his happy restoration." This practice of touching ceased at the accession of the present house of Brunswick.

But others beside these of royal blood have made pretensions of curing diseases by the royal touch. The most celebrated of these was Mr. Valentine G eatrakes, an Irish gentleman born in 1628. According to his own account of himself, he began in 1662 to have a strange persuasion in his mind that the gift of curing the king's evil was bestowed upon him, and upon trial he found himself successful. After this, he ventured upon agues, and in time upon all diseases



whatever. At the request of the Earl of Orrery, he went to England to attempt the cure of Lady Conway, who was troubled with a continued and violent headache, and though he failed in that case, he is said to have wrought many and surprising cures; an account of which he published himself, with the names of those who were cured, their diseases, the time when and the place where and the witnesses who were present. Many of these witnesses are persons of such unexceptionable credit that as we cannot suspect they were imposed upon, so we cannot suspect that they would impose. Among them are grave divines, and eminent physicians, such as Bishop Patrick and Dean Rust, Sir Wm. Smith, and Dr. Denton. We give you as a curiosity the certificate of Rev. Dr. Rust, afterwards Bishop of Dromere:

"Being desired to give my testimony of Mr. Greatrakes and his cures, I do hereby certify that I have, with some curiosity, been an observer of him and of his operations—and I take him to be a person of an honest and upright mind, a free and open spirit, a cheerful and agreeable humor, an inoffensive conversation, of large and generous principles, and that carries on no design of faction and interest. I have been an eyewitness of many hundreds that have come under his hands, especially during his stay at Lord Conway's for three weeks or a month together, and I must profess myself convinced (however it be from an immediate gift or a peculiarity of complexion) that he has a virtue more than ordinary; for though I have seen him touch many with little or no success, yet it must not be denied that I have seen, too, in very many instances, by his spittle and the touch or stroke of his hand, humors put into odd and violent fermentations, pains strangely fly before him, till he has chased them out at some of the extreme parts of the body; the King's evil in a few days wonderfully dried up; knobs or kernels brought to a supuration; humors ripened; ulcerous sores skinned and cured; hard swellings in women's breasts abated, cold and senseless limbs restored to their heat and life; scabs all over the body, which have been for many years and counted incurable, peeled and dried up; many people relieved in cases of deafness, blindness, dimness of sight; twenty several persons, in fits of the falling sickness, or convulsions, or hysterical passions, (for I am not wise enough to distinguish them,) upon laying his hands upon their breasts, (or on the top of their clothes,) within a few minutes brought to their senses so as to be able to tell where their pain lay, which he has followed till he pursued it out of the body. I can say little to the permanency of his cures—many, I do believe, continue firm, but several of these of the falling sickness I heard had relapsed before I left the country, but after much longer intervals than they were wont to enjoy. The terms of wards he used are, 'God Almighty heal thee for his mercy's sake,' and if they profess to receive any benefit, he bids them give God the praise, and that (so far as I can judge) with a sincere devotion. This is, in short, the matter of fact, which is testified to be true by me."

The cures performed by Prince Hohenlohe are of the same nature, and may be ascribed to the same cause. Having practised for some time in Germany with success, he became generally known in England some thirty years since by an extraordinary cure which he is said to have performed on a

nun, at the convent of New-Hall, near Chemsford, Essex county.

It should be known, that it was not necessary that he should see, or be near his patient, as prayers were the only means which he employed; he therefore remained at his residence in Bamburg. The nun at New-Hall had been for a year and a half afflicted with a large and painful swelling of the right hand and arm, which resisted every medical application.— This being the case, the superior of the convent applied for the aid of Prince Hohenlohe. The answer which he returned affords some insight into the cause of the effect which he sometimes produced.

“At 8 o'clock, on the 3d of May,” he says, “I will, in compliance with your request, offer up my prayers for your recovery. At the same hour, after having confessed and received the sacrament, join your prayers also with that evangelical fervor, *and that entire faith*, which we owe to our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Stir up from the very bottom of your heart the divine virtues of true repentance. Christian charity, *a boundless belief that your prayers will be granted*, and a steadfast resolution to lead an exemplary life to the end that you may continue in a state of grace.”

It cannot be denied that the advice was most excellent, both as regards the body and the soul.

Dr. Badelly, the surgeon of the convent, gives the following as the result. “On the 3d of May,” says he, “she went through the religious process prescribed by the Prince.— Mass being ended, Miss O’Conner, not finding the immediate relief which she expected, exclaimed ‘Thy will be done, O Lord; thou hast not thought me worthy of this cure.’ Almost immediately after she felt an extraordinary sensation through the whole arm to the ends of her fingers. The pain instantly left her and the swelling gradually subsided, although it was some weeks before the hand resumed its natural size and shape.” Other cures still more wonderful followed, and the Prince was so overwhelmed with applications from all quarters that he found it impossible to answer each individual case; he therefore adopted the system of offering his prayers for a particular district on certain appointed days. For instance “7 o’clock in the morning on the 1st of Aug. was appointed for curing all the diseases in Ireland, and notice was given to the religious communities in that island, that it would be proper for each of them at the same hour to perform a mass: such was the wonderful power of the Prince’s supplications and the church’s offerings, that many, perhaps thousands, were cured of various diseases.”

This delusion flourished for some considerable time, but gradually died away, though the Prince has been but a short time dead.

In these three delusions the same causes were at work to produce the cure of disease, the recuperative energies of nature, aided by strong faith and that influence which the mind is known ever to exert upon the body. That many were cured by the king's touch cannot be doubted, as we have said before; but we think it equally evident that this was effected by the powers of nature, aided by strong hope, and in many instances the absolute certainty of cure. Such feelings are calculated at all times to impart tone to the system, and especially to benefit those of a scrofulous diathesis, in whom the vital powers are generally weak and feeble. It should further be remembered, that as the regal touch was not in all cases successful, so in those in which it succeeded, the concurrence of the cure with the touch may have been quite accidental, while other causes were operating to produce the effect; the disease may have already been in a process of recovery; and at the time of being touched, either the strength of the patient's constitution may have brought the disease to a favorable crisis, or a change of air or exercise, or a new regimen, or other similar causes may have begun the cure.

But whatever may have been the circumstances of the case, we are in general safe in referring the cure to the recuperative energies of nature, aided by the amazing power which impressions made upon the mind produce upon the body. In this case these impressions must have been most vivid. The person touched must have had his imagination heated with the religious solemnity of the ceremony, with the dignity of the king, and other striking circumstances which attended the touch.

The means used by Greatrakes and Prince Hohenlohe must strike every mind as totally inadequate of themselves to the effect produced; yet these may most satisfactorily be accounted for on the same principle as we have accounted for the cures by the king's touch. The means used by Prince Hohenlohe were peculiarly striking, and in persons of strong imaginations and high religious sensibilities must have produced a wonderful effect. To all the solemnities of a highly impressing form of worship, it will be remembered that he exhorts to an entire faith and a boundless belief that the prayers will be granted; and nature, aided by such a faith, will doubtless perform wonderful cures. One other fact should also here be noticed. The cures attributed to the prayers of Prince Hohenlohe were mostly of cases of a purely nervous character—palsy, lameness, defect of sight, hearing, &c. Dr. Pfeuffer, the physician of the hospital at Bamberg, asserts in his medical researches that these cases were all chronic disorders—not one of an acute character. A well experienced medical writer says that "the cures in the Ho-



henlohe cases depended entirely upon the degree of religious feeling or enthusiasm entertained by the sick."

But some may doubt whether the mind can thus influence and control the organs of the body. Before, then, considering any other medical delusion, let us briefly examine this point. It is a subject to which we can here do but little justice, but to it we ask your candid consideration.

That impressions made upon the mind induce surprising changes in the habit of the body, we are as certain of as we are that a change can be wrought on it by medicines or any other external cause. The truth of this, so far as it relates to a change for the worse, will hardly be disputed. Can there be anything more incontrovertibly true than that care and anxiety, disappointment in what we had ardently wished for, or the loss of that which we have affectionately loved, by preying upon the mind and engrossing all its attention, will disorder the whole system, and become the source both of acute and chronic diseases? Grief has been well called "a heavy executioner—nothing more crucifies the soul, nor overthrows the health of the body than sorrow." The Psalmist expresses this truth most truly when he says, "My soul melteth away for very heaviness." Shakespeare, with consummate knowledge of the workings of the human heart, makes Macbeth ask the physician:

"Canst thou minister to a mind diseased,  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the foul bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart?"

But not to dwell upon the more silent workings of grief, undermining and ruining the health by degrees, consider the impressions made upon the body by fear, by anger, by joy, &c. If experience has not brought cases to your knowledge of the effect of the passions, the historian will furnish you with abundant instances, and the physician will corroborate his testimony.

Most remarkable in the history of France is the story of John de Poitiers, Count de St. Valier. Convicted of conspiracy against Francis I. and condemned to lose his head at Lyons, fear and dread so affected him that in one night his hair turned so entirely gray that the officers of the prison the next morning did not recognise him. Although pardoned, he soon after died from the effects of the fear.

Jaundice has been known to occur almost instantaneously upon a fit of anger, and within twenty-four hours after the receipt of bad news.

Joy has often been known to produce sudden death. Va-

lerius Maximus relates the case of two matrons who died with joy on seeing their sons return safe from battle. Juventius Thelma, to whom a triumph was decreed for subjugating Corsica, fell down dead at the foot of the altar at which he was offering up his thanksgivings. Many such cases both in ancient and modern times are on record.

While the passions may produce disease and even death, there are also numberless cases well attested where disease has been alleviated and even cured by the same means.—Count de Chavagnac relates of himself, that when a general in the imperial army, and laid up in bed with a paroxysm of the gout, an alarm was raised that the Marshal de Turenne was on the march to surprise him. Though he was not able before to move hand or foot, yet the fear of getting into the hands of the French wrought such a change in him that he got out of his bed—dressed himself and entering his carriage, all without help, was carried to a safe retreat.—Gassendus, a grave and serious philosopher, worthy of all credit, relates this anecdote of the celebrated Peiresque:—The palsy had deprived him of the use of his right side, and also of his speech. In this helpless condition he received a letter from a friend which he read with a great degree of joy, and having, soon after, heard a song finely sung, he was so transported that he actually broke out into an exclamation of praise, and from that moment his paralytic members recovered their freedom and activity.

But we need not speak to physicians of the effect produced on disease by the passions; they know them well, and if skilful daily seek to realize them. Hippocrates, and after him Aretæus, Paulus and Galen, together with many distinguished modern medical writers, recommend as of great service in certain diseases to excite in the mind of the patient anger, fear, hope, joy and the like.

Dr. Paris relates a curious instance of the power of imagination or faith in curing disease. When the powers of nitrous oxide were first discovered, Dr. Beddœs, imagining it to be a cure for paralysis, selected a patient on whom to make the trial, and entrusted the management of the gas to Sir Humphrey Davy. Before administering it, the doctor, to ascertain the temperature of the patient, placed the bulb of a small thermometer under his tongue, when the paralytic man, full of faith, but ignorant of the process to which he was to submit, thinking that the talisman was now in full operation, in a burst of enthusiasm declared that he felt its effects throughout the whole body. The doctor took the hint, and desired his patient to return the next day; when the same ceremony was performed, and so on for a fortnight, when he was dismissed cured, no other means having been used.

As fear is well known to induce susceptibility to conta-

gious diseases, so are they often cured by faith and hope. When the cholera first appeared in Canada, a man named Ayres, a full blooded Yankee from Vermont, declared himself to be St. Roche, the chief patron saint of the Canadians, and renowned for his prayer in averting pestilential diseases. He was reported to have descended from heaven to cure his suffering people of the cholera, and many were the cases which he seemed to cure, while doubtless many others were dispossessed of their fright, who might but for his inspiring influences have fallen victims to the disease. The only remedy which he employed was a mixture of maple sugar, charcoal and molasses.

That the eager confidence of the patient in the skill of his physician, and the firm expectation of relief by his efforts, have sometimes a wonderful efficacy, cannot indeed be doubted. Flenius, in his work "*De viribus imaginationis*," corroborates this opinion by the authority of Galen and others, and tells us that in general all physicians subscribe to it. — The celebrated Peeblin says much to the same purpose. In his opinion, the power of the mind in determining the operation and efficacy of medicine is very great. It will, he says, not only increase or diminish their usual effects, but also change them to a manner of operation directly contrary, and communicate a healing quality to the most inadequate means, even to a bread pill disguised as a medicine and swallowed with best confidence in the skill of the person who administers it.

Burton, in his anatomy of melancholy, says, "An essential thing to be required in a patient is confidence; to be of good cheer and have sure hope that his physician can heal him. Axiocetus, sick almost to death, at the very sight of Socrates recovered his former health. Paracelsus says, that the reason why Hippocrates was so fortunate in his cures was not on account of any extraordinary skill which he had, but because the common people had a most strong conceit of his worth. Montanus, in his directions to a sick matron, tells her, if she will be cured, she must be of a most abiding patience, faithful obedience and singular constancy, for if she remit or despair, she can expect or hope for no good success.

We have not time to instance further from the last number of cases before us, to show you the influence of the mind upon the body. Sterne spoke but the truth when he said, "The body and mind are like a jerkin and a jerkin's lining, rumple the one and you rumple the other."

Pass we on to other "medical delusions" in which we may see the combined influence of imagination and nature in effecting cures.

Bishop Berkley, who lived in the former part of the last century, and justly esteemed by all as a most learned, pious,

and liberal divine, thought himself much relieved from a chronic complaint under which he suffered by the use of tar water. Prescribing it with much success for his friends, he imagined that, like Townsend with his sarsaparilla, he had found an universal panacea, a cure for all the ills to which flesh is heir. So confident was he in the virtues of his specific, that he published two essays of considerable volume upon the virtues of tar water. He declared it to be a perfect cure for all impurities of the blood, coughs, pleurisy, erysipelas, asthma, dyspepsia, cachexia, &c — that it was of essential service in gout and fevers, and even a preventive of small pox. Indeed tar water was as universal a panacea in the good Bishop's estimation as cod-liver oil, though we would by no means rate the medical virtues of the one with the other, is now with many credulous and over zealous practitioners. After speaking of its efficacy in fevers, the Bishop says, "I have had all this confirmed by my own experience in the late sickly season of the year 1741; having had in my own family twenty-five fevers cured by this medicine water drunk copiously."

The number of fevers cured in the Bishop's family must remind you, gentlemen, of the success that was said to attend the homoeopathic treatment of cholera at Cincinnati. Many more were cured than there were cases reported in the city. Catharsis, more than usual, yielding readily to twenty-four hours' abstinence, was dubbed cholera. And so doubtless the Bishop called every flush a fever. He forgot that there was a curative power in the human system itself, and so all the sick that drank tar water and recovered he thought were cured by the tar water. He made the same mistake which many now do, he attributed the effect to the wrong cause. He died, however, at last, so suddenly "that there was not time enough," says Dr. H. says, "to stir up a quart of his panacea." We doubtless all wonder that such a wise and learned man did not know better than to attribute so much virtue to tar-water. But he did not, and men perhaps as learned have thought as much of equally ridiculous things, even of infinitesimal doses of such inert substances as charcoal and oyster shell.

The history of medical delusions most clearly teaches us that folly is not confined to fools—that by fallacies in physic the wise as well as the simple are caught. The profoundest philosophers have placed confidence in fools, and done their bidding. Sir Robert Boyle and Lord Bacon may serve for examples, and Martin Luther gives this specimen of his weakness and credulity. "Experience," he says, "has proved the toad to be endowed with valuable qualities. If you run a sick through three toads, and after having dried them in the sun, apply them to any pestilent humor, they draw out all the poison, and the malady will disappear." Indeed,



there can be no greater medical delusion than the very common one that clergymen and lawyers, since they ought to be wise and studious men, must therefore be good and safe judges of medical science and skill. We have been regularly admitted to both professions, mingled much with brethren of the two orders, and we must say that outside of their professional pursuits or peculiar studies they are most frequently the simplest of simple beings, "*non omnia possumus omnes.*"

In 1796, a physician of Connecticut, by name Perkins, introduced a novel and for sometime most successful practice of medicine. He contended that all diseases might be cured by simply drawing over the parts affected certain pieces of metal which he called tractors; and the effect was supposed to be produced by galvanic, electric or magnetic influence. In two years after their discovery, the tractors had been widely introduced into Europe. The fame of their virtue spread like wild fire. In eight years the humbug had become so popular that a "Perkinean Institution" was formed in London, with a large proportion of its members from among the ranks of the titled, the learned and the reverend. The society had its public dinners in honor of the great discovery, volumes of certificates of cures were published; the committee attesting that as early as 1802, 5,000 cures had been effected.

Adirine, a professor in one of our New England colleges, thus writes, "I have used the tractors with success in several cases in my own family; and although like Naaman, the Syrian, I cannot tell why the waters of Jordan should be better than Abana and Parpar, rivers of Damascus, yet since experience has proven them so, no reasoning can change my opinion."

But there were some unbelievers, and they determined to test the virtue of the tractors. Dr. Haygarth and Dr. Falconer for this purpose selected from the general hospital at Bath five patients, and submitted them to the operation of false tractors, made not of metal, but of wood, so painted as to resemble the genuine. The diseases of these patients were chronic gout and rheumatism. Upon the affected parts being stroked in the lightest manner with these pieces of wood, all the patients declared themselves relieved, and all returned public thanks in church for their cures. In one of these cases, the patient, Miss Ann Hill, exclaimed, "O, me! who could have thought it that these little things could pull the pain from one. Well, to be sure—the longer one lives, the more one sees, ah! dear." Similar experiments were made at the Bristol Infirmary with wood, slate pencil, tobacco pipes and with the same results. Men who were unable to lift up, or to use their arms in any way, were after the application of the sup-

posed metallic tractors speedily enabled to carry coals and other things of weight with great ease.

When these facts were made known by the physicians who had practised the deceit, Perkinism was immediately at a discount, the institute was dissolved, and now the whole scheme is remembered only as a past folly—a wonderful delusion. The same error was committed by those who believed in the tractors as was made by Bishop Berkley in regard to the tar water. They forgot that the curative power of nature is always at work healing disease, and that faith, hope and imagination render it the most powerful assistance. They thought that all who recovered after the use of the tractors were cured by them, just as Bishop Berkley did, that all who recovered after using tar-water were cured by it.

We now come to the more modern and still somewhat fashionable medical delusion, homoeopathy, and because it is in certain quarters, and among certain classes so fashionable, though not perhaps so much as was once Perkins' metallic tractors, it deserves more than a passing notice. It is sometimes called a "system of medicine," though to this it has no more title than a pot of boiling water to be called a pot of soup. It is a semblance and nothing more.

The three great principles which Hahnemann, its founder, promulgated as lying at the base of his theory are these:

1st. The doctrine which is expressed by the Latin phrase, "*similia similibus curantur*," which he denominated the sole law of nature in therapeutics, but which might be called the sole Latin of his followers.

2d. That an increased power is given to medicines by an exceedingly minute division, supposed to be produced by agitation, trituration, &c.

3d. That psora (vulgarly called itch) is the sole true and fundamental cause of seven-eighths at least of all chronic diseases.

The principle "*similia*," &c., if it can be called a principle, which principle is none, is that the same thing that will cause a disease will also cure it, and vice versa. This may have some slight foundation in fact, as was well known to physicians long before the days of Hahnemann, but it is far from being an invariable law. An over dose of creosote will produce vomiting, as will an over dose of almost any other medicine; while at the same time creosote is a most efficient agent in checking excessive vomiting; but it does not, therefore, follow that it cures vomiting in one instance solely because it produces it in another. Tartar emetic, given in usual doses, will excite vomiting alike in the sick and in the well. Now if this principle of homoeopathy be true, tartar emetic in small doses should cure every case of vomiting, which it has not itself induced; but it will do no such thing.

Great tolerance of the medicine may indeed be established, as in the favorite French treatment of pneumonia, but it was never known to alleviate, much less to cure vomiting.

Again, it is said by these theorists, that sulphur given to persons in health will produce an irruption similar to the itch. But is this true? Our good mothers in former days, and many mothers do the same thing now, were in the habit of giving their children every morning in the spring liberal doses of sulphur and molasses, under the impression that it purified the blood, and in other ways conduced to health. But did their little ones thereby receive the itch or any other cutaneous disease? Many of you doubtless can answer from your own experience. We never heard of such a result.

Hahnemann affirms that Peruvian bark given to a healthy person produces chills and fever. This, says a writer in the New-York "Scalpel," to whom we gladly acknowledge ourselves much indebted for this part of our lecture, "we from positive experience utterly deny."

All that we can say for ourselves is, that we have never known or heard of such a case. And even these facts, which at first sight seem to support this principle of Hahnemann, may in other ways be more satisfactorily explained. Take the fact that it is better to thaw a frozen limb with cold water and snow than with warm water. What is the explanation? Simply this, that a gradual restoration of the part to its natural state is better than to restore it suddenly. There is in this certainly no illustration of the principle *similia similibus curantur*, any more than there is in the fact, that it is better to give food gradually to a starving man than it is to attempt to fill him at once. The loose character of the process upon which Hahnemann relies to establish the great principle of his theory may be judged of by a single example.

He asserts in his *Organon*, that the smell of roses causes some persons to faint, and that therefore the smell of roses must, according to the principle "*similia, &c.*," be an effectual cure for fainting, in proof of which he cites a passage from an old medical book, in which the credulous author states that the Princess Eudisia with rose water restored a person who had fainted.

"Is it possible," exclaims Dr. Holmes, "that a man who is guilty of such pedantic folly as this, a man who can see a confirmation of his doctrine in such a recovery as this, a recovery which is happening every day, from a breath of air, a drop or two of water, untying a bonnet string, loosening a stay lace, and which can hardly help happening, whatever is done; is it possible that a man whose pages—not here and there one—but hundreds upon hundreds are loaded with such trivialities, is the Newton—the Columbus—the Hervey of the 19th century?"

Upon the second assertion of Hahnemann (for from respect to truth we dare not call it a principle) rests the whole of his materia medica; its doses were the millionth or decillionth part of a grain or drop. Hahnemann assures us that he can cure intermittent fever with millionth, and syphilis with sextillionth doses of mercury. To those who comprehend the manner in which medicine has been elevated to a science, and who know that all its valuable portions consist of facts, the very mention of such a scheme, which sets aside all former observations, contradicts all previous experience, upsets not only theory which may be wrong, but facts which cannot—in short a scheme which, insulting rational belief as folly demands the most implicit credulity from its followers, must appear to every philosophic mind as the height of folly. With such formidable weapons homoeopathy sprang into existence, and boldly undertook the modest task of not only curing all the ills that flesh is heir to, but of overturning in a day the whole superstructure of medical science, built upon the accumulated observations of more than two thousand years; and its followers still coolly assume that their master's great discovery has blotted out all the therapeutics of past ages.

But these views of the efficacy of infinitesimal doses of medicine are visionary and totally unsupported by fact.—Every medicinal substance has its minimum point of action, below which its effects are no longer visible. A grain of opium taken by an adult produces a moderate but sensible effect. Every additional grain increases this effect, and every reduction detracts from it, until its action becomes entirely inappreciable. These remarks apply to all medicinal agents. Below their minimum point of appreciable action, they may be given to a patient without the slightest benefit or injury, for any length of time, provided always that it be done without his knowledge. The opinion that any curative result can be obtained, except through the imagination merely, from doses of any medicine reduced a million of times below the point where the most accurate observers cease to perceive any effect, and that this reduction may be carried a million of degrees lower still, with constantly increasing effect, is an idea too utterly preposterous for any region outside the confines of a mad-house.

Yet such is homoeopath.

“The effect of medicinal substances are twofold, viz., primitive, as the violent action produced by large quantities of certain drugs, purgation, sweating, &c., and secondary or homoeopathic in which the action is determined to the diseased part, the active properties becoming more developed in proportion to the minuteness of the dose,” in short, homoeopaths are cautioned against too minute a subdivision of medicine, lest it should become so energetic as to give rise to



dangerous symptoms. But not only subdivision increases the power of the medicine, but even the shakes which are given it. We tremble when we think what mischief has been done by the incautious direction so often labelled on a draught—"When taken to be well-shaken." Hear Hahnemann:

"Besides the homoeopathic medicament acquires at each division or dilution an extraordinary degree of power by the friction or shock imparted to it as means of developing the inherent virtues of medicines, unknown before me, and which is so energetic that, of late, experience has obliged me to shake only twice, whereas formerly I prescribed ten shakes to each dilution."

How Hahnemann discovered the mighty truth that the potency of medicines increases in the ratio of the decrease of the dose we know not. Homoeopaths must indeed feel humiliated for poor human nature, when they reflect that the world so long believed the opposite pernicious and fatal error, while they congratulate themselves that they at least have found out that poisons kill not in large but minute doses.—How wonderful too and sagacious in the mind of Hahnemann must have been the process of ratiocination, by which he determined the necessary number of the shakes. But let us listen to the philosopher himself upon infinitessimals:

"A grain of salt," he says, "is divided to a millionth degree of attenuation; this powder is dissolved in diluted alcohol, and the division extended to the decillionth degree; carried to this degree of dilution, sea salt is a powerful and heroic medicament which is only to be administered to patients with the greatest caution."

The absurdity of such a statement as this is evident to every physician and chemist, for there is no water or alcohol that does not contain a hundred times more salt than is here prescribed, and what adds to the absurdity is, that this remedy so heroic and requiring such caution, is given to patients who are taking millions of times more of it with it every meal, whose secretions, whose gastric juices and every particle of whose blood contains at all times and as an indispensable constituent millions of times more salt than is here prescribed with the view of its producing powerful medicinal effects. A grain of salt dropt into the lake would be quite as appreciable, and its effects quite as heroic.

Dr. F. F. Quinn, of London, among the most celebrated homoeopaths now living, published a few years since a Latin work upon his favorite theory. From it we will also select one example of the potency of a simple and in usual doses inert substance.

Fewer, "*matricaria chamomilla*," though once used, has long been banished from the shelves of the apothecary and the physician, its virtues being appreciated in the recipes

of old women, rather than in the prescriptions of physicians. Yet by Dr. Quinn its virtues have been diffused over thirteen pages, and he declares it possessed of no less than two hundred and seventy-two active qualities. We will notice a few. The 29th reads thus:

“*Cogitationes, idææ, evanescentes.*”

The 45th requires that an infant should be dandled, telling us the important fact that otherwise the baby would become restless.

“*Non nisi gestatus quiescero potest infans.*”

The 51st evinces how closely homœopathists notice symptoms. A patient taking a decillionth part of a grain of chamomilla grows sulky for exactly the period of two hours.

“*Morositas per duas horas durans.*”

The 88th property describes a peculiar kind of toothache.

The singularity consists in the tooth contracting a violent antipathy to hot coffee.

“*Odontalgia post haustum calidum (maxime, coffeæ) potum sevriens.*”

But the 102d and 103d qualities of feverfew are most wonderful. Under its potent influence, the teeth begin to lengthen, and even actually stagger.

“*Dentes elongati  
Dentium vacillatio.*”

Listen once more to Hahnemann himself: “Gold, silver, platina, charcoal are without action on men in their ordinary state; but from the continued trituration of a grain of gold with a hundred grains of sugar there results a preparation which has great medicinal virtues. If a grain of this mixture be taken and triturated with another hundred grains of sugar, and if this process be continued until each grain of the ultimate preparation contain a quadrillion part of a grain of gold, we shall then have a medicament in which the medicinal virtue of the gold is so much developed that it will be sufficient to take a grain, place it in a phial, and cause the air from it to be breathed for a few instants by a melancholic individual, in which the disgust of life is so far as to incline to suicide, in order that an hour afterwards this person be delivered from his evil demon and restored to his taste for life.”

Surely common sense must have existed in a homœopathic state of dilution in the brains of men capable of conceiving and propagating such absurdities, yet we must confess, as we have before said, all the deluded are not of necessity either rogues or fools. There are many of enthusiastic dispositions easily led away by novelty or caught by specious arguments, who are neither absolutely weak in mind, nor wrong in purpose. Every day's experience shows us individuals who

display this intellectual singularity and the combination of vigor and weakness, of general right reasoning and special folly, is at once curious and instructive. Such a combination is indeed incompatible with great soundness of mind, or much depth of information, but observation shows that it is consistent with brilliant intellectual qualities, with wit, eloquence or imagination.

But this second great principle! of homoeopathy has not been rejected by the scientific world merely on account of its absurdity, but only after full and fair trial. To give a specimen of the practical excellences of homoeopathisin, we cannot perhaps do better than to refer to the course pursued by the Russian government toward it. A Saxon physician, M. Hermann, the great apostle of the system in Russia, was invested by the Grand Duke Michael with full powers to display in a course of clinical experiments its superiority over the common practice and theory of the day.

One of the wards of the "Hospital de Tuttschin," which contained a number of soldiers affected with fever and dysentery, was allotted to his special management, during a space of two months.

The following table exhibits the results:

	Patients.	Cured.	Died.	Removed.
Common method,	457	364		93
Homoeopathic method,	128	65	5	58

The Grand Duke was satisfied and withdrew his commission. Sometime after this, the minister of the Russian government gave M. Hermann authority to select his own hospital, and to make any arrangements he saw fit. The wards were fresh painted, and every hygienic precaution faithfully executed. Even the kitchen was placed under his entire control and superintendence, and in order to prevent the possibility of any interference, a sentinel was placed before the door, and none permitted to enter during the occasional absence of M. Hermann. His first request respecting the patients was a very moderate and modest one, viz: that none should be sent to his hospital who labored under ulcers, syphilis, dropsies, phthisis, &c., and that he should have the selection of all his own cases. Even under these circumstances the results were most unfavorable. The proportion of deaths to recoveries was much higher than in ordinary practice, and the duration of the treatment was always protracted and tedious.

Many also and varied were the trials of the infinitesimal doses of Hahnemann in most of the great cities of Europe, both in hospitals and private practice. Preparations of the homoeopathic pharmacutists alone were used, and the result has been the same; they proved entirely inert and ineffica-

cious. Applied to acute and urgent diseases, they were found to produce not the slightest effect; but when tried upon chronic disorders, especially in those of the nervous and susceptible, the result was very different. Among such, sensations and symptoms were often produced in a manner more prompt and significant than results from the ordinary use of the most potent remedies, and cures were effected of a most striking kind.

Results so contradictory readily found their solution in the fact that sensations as varied and remarkable, and cures as decisive, were produced in the same class of patients when globules of starch or sugar alone were prescribed—the patients supposing themselves taking the usual homoeopathic remedies—just as was the case when wooden tractors instead of metallic were used—thus adding to the already innumerable proofs of the power of nature aided by the imagination, to cure a certain class of diseases. Infinitessimals are proved to cure diseases precisely as charms and amulets, the king's touch, Greatrakes' strokings, Hohenlohe's prayers, Perkins' metallic tractors and the tar water of Berkley were once proved to do the same thing.

The reasoning is this: A patient took a decillionth part of a grain of oyster shell, three or four times a day, and got well; therefore the oyster shell cured him. Says the juggler, as he performs some astonishing feat for the amusement of children and grown up infants, "you see that this is so—now I will use just a very little of my powder. 'Hic, presto, change in a moment,' and it is so." Many who attend such intellectual scenes of amusement doubtless believe that the change is produced by the wonderful little powder, and therein commit the same error as the believers in the metallic tractors, homoeopathy, &c. The application of the juggler's little powder is the antecedent of the result, just as the application of the homoeopath's little powder is the antecedent of the results over which he boasts; and the one might, with quite as much cause as the other, call the result the effect of his little powder.

The 3d doctrine of Hahnemann is so ridiculous that we need but merely mention it. "The itch," says the Medical Luminary of the 19th century, "is the the only real, fundamental, and productive cause of all the morbid forms known by the names of weakness, nervousness, hysterics, hypochondria, mania, melancholy, epilepsy, spasms of all kinds, rickets, caries, cancer, fungus hæmatodes, gout, jaundice, cyanosis, dropsy, cataract, gravel, &c., &c., &c."

A great mind strikes out a path for itself. Who would have imagined that the itch, a disease produced by a little insect, "*acarius scabiei*," was the cause of diseases apparently so dissimilar as cancer, cataract and the gravel, of rickets, jaundice and cyanosis? Perhaps the sage discovered the



wonderful truth by practising himself for a long time upon the "Scotch fiddle." How many of his genteel and delicate followers truly believe that in their "weakness and nervousness they have nothing but the itch," we know not.

Such was homœopathy under Hahnemann,

"The shadow of a shadow—  
An infinitesimal abstraction of etherial inanity."

As a system we may say of it, "*nihil sed nominis umbra*," it is nothing but the shadow of a name, its professors were "*homunculi non homines*."

Such was homœopathy; but what is it now? Does its whole strength continue, as in the days of its founder, to be in its weakness? Does it still find the decillionth part of a grain of table salt too potent to be used without the greatest caution? To say nothing of the stealthy use of common remedies, what have its practitioners to do with such remedies as morphine, quinine, stricknine, delphine, veratrine and all those highly concentrated remedial agencies with which the achievements of modern chemistry have so much enriched the science of medicine? We find those now constituting the almost entire *materia medica* of the homœopath; not indeed those little boxes which they sell for family use—they are but sugared playthings for children, but those which they use themselves; these are remedies so concentrated that many of them act powerfully in doses almost as minute as Hahnemann's old infinitesimals, are easily sugared and comprised in the bulk of a pin's head. But what business has homœopathy with such remedies? The principle which underlays its very existence is dilution, dilution ad infinitum. What then has it to do with concentration? What can it honestly do with such remedies? His disciples cannot answer these questions. To homœopathy, however, strictly and honestly practised, we concede its full share of cures, effected through the medium of the imagination; but in this mode of curing, it has no higher claim upon public confidence than the medical delusions we have before considered, or one which we now remember, if possible, more applicable; we mean the celebrated rain-water cure which flourished in New-York and Brooklyn some twenty-five or thirty years ago.

Under that system, a few drops of rain-water, administered daily, accompanied with similar restrictions with regard to diet, as those now imposed by the homœopath, made cures as numerous, as speedy and as remarkable as any ever made by the latter; and these cures were in both cases made in precisely the same manner, an improved regimen and invigorated hope being the real instruments, and a few drops of water, possessing no medicinal properties more in the one case than in the other, the apparent ones. We have treated

this delusion more seriously than we think it deserves. The bubble, like all others, will soon burst, and then the public will wonder, as they have before, how they could so easily be deceived. The delusion, however, is not so extensive as many imagine. The whole number of practitioners in New-York officially announced by the Hahnemann Academy of medicine is 25, while the regular practitioners amount to 875. The proportion of homoeopathic doctors to the medical faculty in that city, therefore, is 1 to 25, and the proportion to the population is 1 for every 14,000. We doubt whether it is as great as this in the country at large, and yet Hahnemann has flourished more than half a century. But homoeopathy has not arisen or flourished without being of much service to mankind. Arriving at a time when positive medication was practiced by all physicians, it has broken in upon this practice of attempting the cure of almost all diseases by enormous and reiterated doses of emetic and purgative medicine. It has aided physicians in learning how much agency the curative power of nature exerts in removing disease.—For this reformation in medical practice we owe to Hahnemann a debt of gratitude which will be felt and acknowledged long after his visionary theories are forgotten. It has also contributed largely to the public health, since many of the ten thousands who once swallowed every quack medicine now content themselves with abstemious diet, with sugar pills, and wonderful to tell, find themselves much improved in health—though to such the words of the poet are most applicable,

“The homoeopathic system, sir, just—give me to a tittle—  
It proves of course any how you cannot take too little;  
If it be good in all complaints to take a dose so small,  
It surely must be better to take no dose at all.”

We had intended to have examined other medical delusions of modern date, but our time and patience are exhausted. Gentlemen of the Medical Society—to you this subject is peculiarly interesting. Briefly and imperfectly as it has been exhibited, you see that there has been from time immemorial a constant succession of medical delusions. It may be said of each, not only that the wonder grew, but that it ceased to grow and at length died, not indeed by violence, but died a natural death. Each, having withstood all assaults, has quietly laid itself down to die, benumbed into the sleep of death by the chill of popular neglect, while the warm breezes of popular favor which it once enjoyed are now bestowed upon some other delusion; so will it ever continue to be while man is what he is, “animal credulum et mendax.”

As one who has retired, I trust forever, from the profession, permit me to close with one word of advice. Respect your-

selves, and your profession and the world will respect you and it. Whatever may be the temptation, use no illegitimate means to increase your practice or your fame. Be yours the sentiment of Pope,

But if the purchase cost so dear a price,  
 As soothing folly, or exalting vice,  
 Then teach me, Heaven, to scorn the guilty bay,  
 Drive from my breast that wretched lust of praise,  
 Unblemished let me live or die unknown —  
 O, grant an honest fame, or grant me none.







